



CORRUPTION: THEORY OF KARMAN HOLDS THE KEY

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Abstract

The present paper expounds the theory of *Karman* (action or deed) to remedy the present-day challenges, especially in the context of rapidly increasing corruption. There is a need of revisiting the thoughts enshrined in ancient Indian scriptures in the present day context. It also focuses that misunderstanding the real nature of the doctrine of *Karman*, discussed in Indian scriptures, leads to aberrated behaviour of the sinful act of corruption. However, proper understanding of the theory of *Karman* is the key to harmony as performance of good actions make the life pure, strengthened, cheerful and peaceful.

Keywords: aberrated behavior, sinful act, self interest, misunderstanding, *karma*, unlawful act, *vikarman*, *akarman*, duty.

INTRODUCTION

Vasudhaiva kutumbakam is the Indian adage which has been reinforced by the Globalization of world impels us to consider the world as a single unit, because it affects all aspects of our lives. However, the ancient Indian tradition retains the core concepts of globalization in the term of sarvajana hitāya sarvajana sukhāya, and sarve bhavantu sukhināḥ sarve santu nirāmayaḥ -welfare for all, happiness for all, and leading healthy life (free from all illness), which has universal value. Even though it has capacity to include and develop new practices and theories, which may have global impact. The theory of *Karman* is one such concept if properly understood, and then we can control most of challenges, especially corruption.

Corruption is a serious challenge in every part and field of our life. At present it is most abusive affair of public office in exchange for self interest. Every day, news paper headlines have one or other story of corruption in the private, public or civil society including religious and social organization in multi-level governance in almost every department. Besides, corruption free governance has been the plank of election of

Corruption: Theory of Karman Holds the Key

political parties. It has become a very serious issue, which affects all aspects of our lives and our values. If the doctrine of *Karman*, propounded in our scriptures is properly understood, then corruption can be reduced to a large extent. Therefore, there is a need of evaluating the core tenets of the theory of *Karman* in the governance of the present system; be it economic, political, judicial, educational, and cultural and so on. Whatever action we perform must be energized with enlightened reasoning along with materialism, the hallmark of consumerist society, and an offshoot of growing capitalism, and then only our world will become pleasurable.

THE CONCEPT OF GLOBALIZATION

Every organization, society or a state seeks growth in their efforts. The science and technology is used to enhance economy of all countries, by developed countries. The formation of various plans and policies for economic development laid emphasize on the importance of science and technology in achieving the plan objectives. This kind of concept has provided various challenges to our traditional values especially to moral values on which the whole structure of our society is founded. In pursuit of economic well being we search meaning of life that has got crowded by the materialism that has become *sin-quo-non* to economic advancement unwisely measured by per capita gross domestic product.

The main objective of ancient Indian education system was man-making through character building and that was necessary for the development of a good and clean society for making the country prosperous. Nevertheless, it appears that the main objective of the people of the present generation is to earn money by any means good or bad. Unfortunately, ends justify the means instead of means justifying the ends. This has led to decline in moral values giving rise to corrupt and unethical behavior. That's why, in the economic, political and even in educational field, most of the persons shy away from their duties. The person having this type of attitude may be termed as a corrupt man and his selfish attitude would come under the purview of corruption. Having only desire for money, position and fame does not come under the purview of evil action hence is not form of corruption. Taking bribe or doing favor to own persons, or to any person for gaining self benefit is only the form of corruption. Thus, basically corruption has two form; unlawful behavior towards others, and giving bribe or misusing power directly or indirectly for self interest. Essentially, corruption is caused by usurping the position of power gratifying the personal illegitimate needs.

GLOBAL ISSUES AND ECONOMIC IMBALANCE

The process of human development is a complex set of variables such as demographic profile, regional and social income distribution, level of education, global connectivity, social order(or disorder), typical attitudinal orientation of people towards leisure and work, impact of newer technologies which affect thinking, behavior and action, changing family and social norms and values and the list goes on.

India has made considerable progress in the field of economic development ever since independence. Five-year planning process has been typically providing the framework

in this regard. Since 2014 the planning commission has been replaced by National Institution for Transformation of India *Ayog (Niti Ayog)* with the purpose of promoting cooperative federalism between centre and states.

Ideologically, the country has completed a full circle of the initial domination of private industrial enterprises (at the time of independence) to spate of nationalizations and evolution of public sector enterprises controlling the commanding heights of economy to the current trend of privatization, liberalization and globalization. In term of governance, the nation is slowly but steadily moving towards globalization and away from license, quota, permit raj etc.

Today, no nation in the world can claim to survive on its own without economic linkages with rest of the world. From the position of the biggest creditor nation of the world at the time of World War II, USA has become the biggest debtor nation of the world and the case of Japan is just the reverse of it. China has emerged as economic power to reckon with leading to unprecedented environmental damage.

Last fifteen years have shown the transformation among Indian business enterprises as well. They have become bold enough to take on the world and emerging Indian multinationals testify this. The revolution in telecom sector and IT are significant in this regard. Finance sector- a key component of services- has also started maturing; stock markets have attracted global attention and the country is slowly becoming attractive to foreign investors. About three hundred million middle class in India has the buying capacity equivalent to European population and that is what has enhanced India's attractiveness in the world. However, the efforts to decentralize the governance structure have not yielded the desired result of imparting integrity and transparency to the system. The country continues to be rated low on corruption as is reported by Transparency International. India's Corruption perception index was 3.1 as per Transparency International's CPI 2011. India has been ranked 87th out of 1781 countries by Transparency International. The administrative decentralization has led to decentralization of corruption. Public administration plagued by corruption, though decentralised, produces unintended opposite effects.

Quite a lot needs to be done in developing infrastructure including sources of energy and human development index of India is still reflecting dismal performance. Poverty, health, hygiene, education and corruption are real issues facing the nation. Development of urban areas has accentuated urban and rural divide and enhanced migration from rural areas has put strain on urban infrastructure. Conspicuous consumption is on the rise making rich-poor divide significantly visible. The economic growth in last two decades has increased the gap between rich and poor. Let us not forget that a nation which becomes a social failure could never remain an economic success for long.

India currently is a nation of young. Fifty percent of its population is below thirty-five years of age. Nuclear families and careerist aspirations have led both husband and wife to seek gainful employment and work for better quality of life. Psychological and physical pressures at home and work place have increased. The spirit of competition for survival and growth has started redefining social relationships among individuals in the

Corruption: Theory of Karman Holds the Key

organization and society. With the enhancement in health care facilities, the longevity has gone up to average sixty seven years but at the same time increase in life-style related incidents and diseases(mainly road accidents, sedentary life-style leading to diabetes, hyper tension, blood pressure, cardiac ailments, strokes) reflect darker side of the development. The increasing trust deficit has led to the rise of tensions among people and is indicated by declining levels of morality and faith among people.

Researches in Brazil on owner-driven ‘organizations’ longevity have shown that the enterprises survive only up to three generations. The first generation becomes the entrepreneur/ manager, the second becomes playboy and the third becomes beggar. The average longevity of business enterprises globally have drastically reduced in the last two decades and one of the research estimates this to be of the order of ten and half years.

In such a chaotic environment values will be at a discount, morals will be down and corruption will be on the rise as each individual, whatever position one occupies, will be seeking to maximize his/her personal wealth through corrupt means. This throws challenge to organizations to maintain their integrity.

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THE DOCTRINE OF KARMAN

In Indian milieu, it is desirable to tress fundamental concepts to the Vedic literature-being earliest and oldest literature of the world. In the earliest period, all people were righteous and each person protected the other. Therefore, in earliest literature, there is neither mention of hell nor the word *duhkha* (sorrow), regarded as son of hell. It occurs in life due to the *karman*. However, this concept is fully discussed in the terms of *sat* or

satya and, *rita* in many, *rcās* (hymns) of *Rgveda*.² These are indicative of the law of nature, and the law in action in the universe. “*The evil-doer can never cross over misery because of their sinful acts.*³” “*The path leading to heaven or light is only for virtuous man*”⁴. Thus, we find the origin of the concept of *Karman* in *Rgveda*, in the context of good deeds rather in the form of law of causation.

In ancient time, the division of *Varṇadharma* was for well-being. In addition, both *dharma* and *rājavidyā* were identical in that *rājavidyā*. The *rājavidyā* is the *varṇadharma* of the *kṣatriya*. This concept is propounded in *Vedas*. We find the discussion of *adhireṣṭra* in its content and *adhyātma* (spiritual) in its concept. The Vedic hymns in a form of prayer of our daily use have political and metaphysical teaching. The *yajña*, includes both *dharma* and *rājavidyā*. The rules have been formed from the same source, i.e. *Vedas*, whether it is for the governance of a world ruler, and of a *parivarta* or *parināman*⁵, a sanyasi, for the welfare of all.⁶ Manu, the great law giver, has clearly asserted:

“*He who is expert in Vedic Science, only deserves command of armies, royal authority, the office of a judge, and sovereignty over the whole world. He who knows the Vedas, like fire having full strength, burns out the taint of his soul which originates from sinful acts.*”⁷

THE YAJÑA (SACRIFICE) AND KARMAN

In Vedic literature, man is commanded to perform *yajña* by offering oblation, the gods are pleased which leads to formation of clouds which in turn shower beneficial rains that help in cultivation which provides food and fodder and water for all beings. Thus the *yajña* itself indicates the meaning of *Karman*, both *Karman* and *yajña* are identical as it is stated that ‘*yajñam vai śreṣṭhatam karma*’- *yajña* is the best form of *karman*. The concept of *yajña*, penetrates the whole teaching of *Vedas*. The prior form of *Karman* may be seen in the concept of Vedic-*yajña* especially in *Yajurveda*. The *Yajurveda* propounds the various forms of sacrifices (*yajña*) in the form of rituals for maintaining the balance of the creation of the universe. However, the actions desiring for fruits is not *yajñya*. In *Gītā* it is stated that “*the action which is not based on yajña, are binding. Therefore, one must perform action without attachment towards results.*”⁸ The simple principle is that the life of human being is in itself a *yajña*, and at the same time it is a *havi* (*oblation*). This *havi* is the cause of for the grand *yajña*, which is the main cause in revolving this universe. Kālidasa has explained this concept in lucidly through the words of sage Mārīca:

“*May Indra pour an abundance of rain for (the benefit of) your subjects. Do you, too, by your extensive sacrifices, Please Indra. May you thus pass rounds (evolutions) of hundreds of ages with your mutual acts laudable by benefits conferred on both the worlds, external and internal*”⁹

Above is the excellent example of the concept of rights and duty of a good governance of the state. The gist of this is that the ruler and their successors must perform good deeds, sacrifices, for ages to come and in this way must please the gods. In the reward of

this Indra, the god, will please and will provide ample showers for watering of the land. Thus, this is the example of reciprocal system in revolving the both worlds. Nevertheless, when desire propelled by personal gain inflicts people, they become selfish and indulge into evil actions, which is the root cause of the corruption. Then the seers pray for the welfare of all. They propounded that the entire creation of the universe is due to the consequences of *Karman*. The person who performs good deeds, in the present world, but has not cognized the world of soul (*ātmaloka*) his accumulated virtuous actions perish even if he has earned virtuous results by performing good deeds. Thus, above analysis drives one to conclude that the theory of action (*Karman*) directly paves the path to the salvation (*mukti*) in later period i.e. *Upaniṣadic* period. Here, action is regarded as one of the means of the attainment of *Mukti*, which became the subject matter of the entire *Upaniṣadic* literature. In *Upaniṣads* we find the philosophical exposition of the doctrine of *Karman*. The concept of *Mukti* itself implies in dual sense; in the sense of freedom from worldly affairs (in spiritual sense) and in context of a society or a state (in physical or material sense) freedom from all kinds of wretched state of beings such as poverty, health problem, corruption etc. Thus, the theory of *Karman* is means of freedom for all beings from any state.

THE DOCTRINE OF KARMAN AND EXTERNAL WORLD

According to the theory of *Karman*, the present world is the result of our *Karman*. It is our actions; the abiding consequences of our deeds cause to a repetition of cycle of birth and death. *Vedānta* system asserts that all creatures (*Jivas*) are universal never die. Even Buddhists, although don't accept the concept of *Ātman* (self), do not deny the continuity of personality. For them an individual is responsible for their good or bad condition.¹⁰ *Karma* is the creator of the universe. Deeds of a being are the cause of his rebirth, and consequently of its continued existence, the whole existing universe of sentient being has its origin in *Karman*. Human beings are closely related *Karman* hence human race is regarded as '*karmasangisu*' (having attachment to work.). This is the reason why man is propelled to action; through action he achieves the desired outcomes. Man is so entrenched in the action that even achievement of salvation is pursued through material actions whereas all things achieved in the perishable world are only transitory in nature and limited by the time, space and matter. By nature such attainments are caused by cycle of death and birth. Therefore action has to be performed in a manner that removes the rootedness through enlightened reasoning and by renunciation the mortal as a lotus though borne out of water yet the water does not envelop it.

The special feature of theory of *Karman* is that it provides proper guidance to human beings for charting out the course of their successful and pleasant future life. It is only this theory which gives stress for being proud of taking birth as human beings. Man is greater than the gods because here we have chance to make our present or future life more delightful. The human form is regarded as the Karmic body because this is the place from where we determine our fortune. This is the starting point of a big circle that determines our future destiny. Therefore, by performing proper action one should avail full tenure of life for making next birth delightful. When a person, after death, goes into world of gods (*devaloka*) for the enjoyment of the rewards of his earned virtuous actions

Corruption: Theory of Karman Holds the Key

stays there until the effect of his past action remains. There he only enjoys, fruits of his *Sancita* (accumulated) *karman*, the reward of his past actions. Nevertheless, as soon as the impact of his past action perish he returns on the earth.¹¹

According to *Upaniṣad* whatever things are in the world is regulated by the Creator of the universe so one must enjoy his possessions with intention of sacrifice, must not be lustful towards other's possessions. If we pursue lustful action, it will lead to corrupt behaviour. We should aspire to live for a hundred years by performing virtuous deeds. The upper age limit of a human being is assumed as hundred years. There is no any other path besides path of *Karman*, by performing which one may not bound by evil or unpleasant deeds¹². The evil is caused by self indulgent actions, the cause of attachment. It means one must be very careful in performing *Karman* as it is responsible for taking beings to good or bad realms. More importantly, one has a choice of *Karman* only and not to its fruit for seeds (*Karman*) begets fruits (*Karma-phala*). Therefore, the best idea lies in the teaching of *niṣkāma-karman* (performance without any attachment towards result) of *Gītā*. According to this thought, one must perform the action without having any longing for fruits.¹³

This concept is also applicable in our practical life. It teaches us that well performed actions always give pleasure and less suffering. On the other hand, if we do not act properly our life becomes painful and many sinful deeds must have been committed. We must not think about result of our performance of action because properly and honestly performed action always produces favourable result and if mistaken produces negative results.

The performance of an action is in our hand. Therefore, we must always perform our action as our duty. In this way, we will keep away ourselves from the consequences, pleasure and pain, of such action, which are hindrance in gaining our objectives. It is the type and quality of action that acts as a seed which bears fruits in consonance with its genetic characteristic. Since action determines the DNA, the outcome-result (*karmaphala*) is embedded into it. Consequently, the action determines the results. So goes the saying 'as you sow, so you reap'. This is the core of theory of action.

PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOCTRINE

In the light of above interpretation, it is important that one must have proper understanding about the core concept of doctrine of *Karman*. If one does not understand properly then it may cause various strenuous situations in present or future life, which might be cause of hindrance in the fulfillment of one's objective. However, if understood properly then he may free from all kinds of perplexities and strenuous situation in present or future life. Thus, proper understanding of theory of *Karman* means what kind of action one must perform and what kind of action not to perform. According to *Gītā* even an intelligent or a most learned person gets confused about the characteristic of *Karman* when it is put in practice. "What is *Karman* (action)? What is *akarman* (inaction)? In fact, even the wise are confused in determining its real nature."¹⁴ The nature of *Karman*, the nature of *vikarma* (action that is prohibited from being performed), and the nature of *akarma*(inaction) must be known, since the truth of the nature of these three intricate is

difficult to be understood¹⁵. Therefore, it is very difficult to understand, for a common person, the real nature of *Karman*. But, if one understands the real nature of these two properly then he will be free from all bad actions and their consequences. Here the term *akarman* is indicative of not performing any action. This is so because of the knowledge of the nature of the Self (*ātman*) of the doer, which is contained in *karman*. The enlightened man performs action only for the welfare for all not for the self.

The above thoughts indicate that whatever be the objective, physical or material or spiritual gain, in the way of the attainment of that objective many obstacles may surface. If one understands the doctrine properly then various problems will be resolved.

In short, we must distinguish properly between action and inaction. *Karman* is a very complex and deep subject. As a matter of fact, even in our practical life we are always perplexed about what we must perform or what must not perform. It happens not only with common man but with learned person also. In fact, making the distinction between the virtuous and in-virtuous action is not an easy task. There is a general paradigm that there is nothing good and nothing bad, the circumstances make it so. Therefore, while performing an action, one must always keep in mind the condition, place and time and above all the purity of his own self. The same idea has been depicted in *Mahānirvāṇatantra*.¹⁶ In this way, the culture and custom of a particular region is not applicable in other region due to various reasons.

In context of prevailing corruption knowing the real nature of corruption is not easy task in the present globalized world. In this context Yājñavalkya has rightly observed that “*with what intention and how the granted money are being utilized, all these must be considered otherwise in the law it becomes an unlawful act.*”¹⁷

Take the simple example of generosity or charity, the giving grant to a needy person or for the welfare of poor or purposeful grant to a particular institution is good for the welfare of the society and country concerned. However, it is necessary to know that whether such type of grant or assistance has really been utilized for the same cause or went in vein. In some of the cases, the people or institution may misuse the money for sake of personal gain. This kind of intention is harmful for the society and country. Therefore, this kind of act comes under the purview of unlawful behavior, which is a kind of corruption. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines “*Impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle; an inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means.*” Thus use of once position of power and authority for personal gain amounts to corruption.

KARMAN AND DUTY

In the light of above interpretation one must know that the proper understanding of the doctrine of *Karman* helps in our profession. We must perform our duty honestly without any self interest. But, as a human being, we must not forget our moral values and the virtuous *saṃskāras* which we have got from our ancestors, parents and society. Furthermore, we must follow only good deeds of our elders, teachers and other respectable persons. As *Upaniṣads* teach that —*yāni anavadyāni karmāṇi tāni sevitavyāni no itarāṇi*¹⁸. It means whatever good conduct of our elders, respectable persons or even

others, only must be followed not their bad habits. In this way, good action means actions acceptable for all, for the welfare for all and not harmful for self or others. By this way one may make his present life more enjoyable and gain success even in strenuous situation. Whatever our profession is, such as a student, teacher, doctor, engineer, and an executive or even politician and so on, if we work wisely, honestly and labouriously then certainly we can achieve our objective easily. It is not necessary that we will get the result of our action immediately. It may take some or more time but would definitely produce results. For example, if someone is preparing for any examination such as, IIT, MBBS and civil services and so on. He works very hard with full dedication but somehow he may not succeed. He must not lose his heart as the result of his effort is not in his hands because it all is dependent on his previous action. However, his effort will not be going in vein because that will take the shape of his accumulated *Karman* and will produce its effect in his future affairs.

THE KARMAN AS AN ACTION

The *Karman* means to do an act such as going, reading, standing, sleeping and so on. Thus, in general, whatever act is it comes into action and produces reaction comes under the purview of the meaning of *Karman*. In this sense, *Karman* means actions that bring result. However, in particular sense *Karman* means good or virtuous action including its consequences. He who perceives inaction in action, and action in inaction, is the enlightened among men, he is a yogi with tranquility of mind, and is the perfect doer of all *Karman* (action). The person who has gained knowledge and realized the Self (*ātman*) does not perform any action, only body performs, he sees *akarma* (inaction) in *karma* (action). They are said to be the cause of release from the cycle of birth and death that is the ultimate goal. Furthermore, the best factor influencing a person to act in a particular way is actuated in following words: “*what is the quality of him who is well to a person who is his well-wisher? The wise call him good who does well to his harm-doers.*”¹⁹ This kind of concept does not require any recognition of mutual service or action.

NATURE OF CORRUPTION

The corruption is not a new concept, but a well-known affair. An analysis of Sanskrit literature reveals that the corruption was prevalent in ancient Indian society. The Vedic seers pray that “*May He forgive the sin which we have committed; because a mortal has many desires.*”²⁰ Corruption was the cause of concern even to Kauṭilya. In his *Arthaśāstra* (300BC), we find detailed analysis. Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra*(3rd BC) discusses about four kinds of branches of study; logic, *Vedas*, economics and political science. He thinks that “*Justice is the basis of law but philosophy is the support of all laws.*”²¹ He discusses under the head of duties of various classes of people, the nature of corruption and the punishment for various kinds of acts. He states that there are forty ways of embezzlement.²² He opines that “*it is possible to taste of honey or poison if placed on the tongue but difficult for an official not to eat up, at least, some part of ruler’s revenue.*”²³ It recognizes that “*the government officials would use their position for personal benefit, misappropriate money, likewise to a fish moving inside the water cannot be known when drinking water*”²⁴. Kauṭilya lamented

that “*it is possible to know even the path of a bird flying in the sky but not the ways of officers moving with their intentions concealed*”²⁵

We know from the Kālidāsa’s *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (4th CE), through the dialogue between fisherman and security person that the corruption was very much prevalent in the civil administration of King Duṣyanta. Thus, the nature of corruption is universal. However, in ancient period the entire system was regulated by law of *Dharma*, which teaches that happiness lies in the discharge of one’s duty. *Dharma* is the fundamental order in nature and human life and behavior in harmony. In *Raghuvamśa*, Kalidasa says:

*“Aja accepted the kingdom, which descended to him, not for the sake of thirst of enjoyment but because of out of respect to his father, - the kingdom which the sons of kings try to get even by foul means.”*²⁶

Manu states: “*It is the eternal law of nature that knowledge and action, the ideal and the practical, must go together for the attainment of success.*”²⁷ The same concept has been enunciated in *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa* in another way.²⁸

Corruption is both a major cause and an effect of impoverishment around the world. It happens at all levels of society, educational and religious institution, judiciary, business, armed and other services and so on. Corruption affects the impoverished the most in developed or under developing countries. The economic and political corruptions are basic cause in the origination of other corruptions. This is so as the economic or political corruption is the misuse of public office for personal gain. Therefore, we must try to find out the basic cause and its effect in general. Further, we must find out the effective solution for the same. The main reason of the flourishing of this abuse is the present system, premised on economic advancement in one way or another.

The consequence of corruption is immensely interrelated with many other challenges. The present form of globalization is the result of international economic system. It requires further close and critical examination as it has very big role in increasing the corruption. This has also creating such situation by which corruption can crush and create wretched condition of people on every side of the world whose condition is already worst. According to theory of *Karman* a person whether he is honest or corrupt is recognized by his act (*Karman*). The desire is the basic cause in the fulfillment of the objective of an individual. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* says:

*“An individual is nothing but his desire. His will-power would follow his desire, and his action will be according to his will. And, he becomes as whatever action he performs and accordingly obtains the consequences.”*²⁹ Further, “*if we perform virtuous act then become virtuous or just person. In the same way if we perform sinful or evil act then become sinner.*”³⁰

It means that if we have desire only then makes effort to achieve our respective goal otherwise not. Whatever be ones desire, such as the wealth, pleasure, power or even social status, accordingly one performs his action and gets result instantly or after sometime. There is no question that if we have properly performed we will not succeed. The result of an action can be delayed but cannot be denied for deeds have to mature to

Corruption: Theory of Karman Holds the Key

fruition. The present condition of an individual has been predestined by the performance of his past actions either in present birth or past birth which are matured to deliver their result and that have form as *prārabdha* or *prāktan karman*. The Vedānta system asserts: ‘*the birth and death is related to only our body since the ātman (soul) is beyond all these processes*’.³¹ But, ‘*whatever things to take place is enveloped by illusion or ignorance, entombed in the subtle body (lingadeha) of which the mind forms a part, from one corporeal existence to another, as determined by the virtuous or evil actions performed in previous lives.*’³²

This concept of *Vedanta* is almost similar to Buddhist theory of *Karman*. Though Buddhist do not believe in the existence of *Ātman* (soul) but they accept the theory of *Karman* with slight modification in the concept. However, the basic dictum is the same in both of the systems.

The duty of a ruler is to perform his functions without having any attachment for his own enjoyment. Kālidāsa has rightly stated that king Duṣyanta takes too much pain for his subjects for solving their day today’s problems without thinking his own pleasure; this is his daily routine like a tree, which gives shelter to others and protect them from searching heat of sun.³³ In *Śāntiparva* it is stated that ‘*All kinds of renunciation in governance duties; all sorts of initiation are in them; all sorts of learning are connected with them; and all sorts of worldly conduct are in them.*³⁴ *The king’s body is not for the worldly enjoyment but to be ready to perform governance duties and to protect nation.*³⁵ *Thus, the main objective of a king is to protect dharma (justice) and to defend all. The happiness of a ruler lies in the happiness of his subjects, and his welfare in the welfare of his subjects. The self interest is not the concern of a ruler rather the in happiness of his people lies the happiness of king.*³⁶ We are born into the situation where our needs and/or our desires place us. As we grow spiritually, it is the influence of those needs, which outweigh the role of desires. Thus, until we take our spiritual progress truly seriously, our rebirths may be more likely is to fulfill worldly desires, such as for physical beauty, material wealth, political power, or even high social or caste status. After all, for many, power truly does corrupt if it not linked with lawful act.

Our scriptures teach us that we must perform actions for neither himself nor his own but for all sentient beings, for their welfare, their ethical and spiritual evolution. The real understanding of the nature of *Karman* is the only savior of the present world from its global gloom of personal over-ambitions and ignorance. In Indian tradition, the conduct and behavior of a man make him a noble person. The external behavior of human being is regarded as conduct while internal behavior is related to his character. The character includes mental status. Thus, the informal combination of these two, conduct and character, are subject of moral valuation. The judgment of one’s character must depend on his conduct. According to ancient Indian concept, the conduct is the highest law- *acaro paramo dharmaḥ*. The meaning of *ācāra* is regulated method of self-discipline; rule of life or mode of conduct in day to day life.³⁷

In the context of a society or a state a leader whatever action performs must be for the

sacrifice, i.e., only for the welfare of all. This kind of leader does not have selfish attitude. In other words, they do not have any lust towards any position, fame or money. They perform their duty without having any attachment towards its result and think only for the welfare for all beings. The *Gītā* speaks clearly that the person who has attained highest position, is free from all bondages, performs action only for the completion of sacrifice. They are unattached towards the result of their action and works for others without having any selfish attitudes.³⁸

In the present scenario, the dishonest or of illegal behaviour of a person comes under the purview of corruption. It is an action of corrupting someone or the state of being morally corrupt. But, what is real nature of the term corruption is not defined. According to Indian scriptures, *Dharma* is regarded as law, which provides certain code of conduct. This law has been classified further in two categories common law and specific law. The common law means the action that is to be performed keeping in the mind the protection of the general nature. These are not only concerned with an individual but it covers all human beings. In the western concept we do not find such type of classification. In western terminology, it comes under the purview of only moral values. But, there is no clear cut definition of moral values.

A virtuous man can never think wrong because his mind is conditioned by virtuous *samskāras* accumulated from his past environment either from his parents or from his friend circle, educational surroundings and so on. The function of his inner-self organ becomes an authority in case of doubtful subjects. It means in a doubtful situation the thought of a virtuous person becomes an authority for rightful decision.³⁹. The reason is his mind is always thinks in rightful direction because of being noble so no sinful thought can enter it. This concept has been clearly illustrated in many treatises of the Indian scriptures. The gist of the same may be seen in *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, which has classified into ten categories; non-violence, truthfulness, non-deceitful, purity, command over senses, charity, control, kindness and peace, all are means to uphold the rightful conduct. This is the duty of human beings, irrespective of any class, cast, creed, group or position, that they must follow this code and conduct prescribed by law maker in our ancient treatises which is applicable in all times for all.

This common law must be followed by everyone. These values affect whole society or country. Therefore, lower to highest class of people must follow these codes of conduct for the development of a country. These are regarded as moral values. Besides these, there are lengthy discussion about other *dharmas*, such as; *varṇa-dharma*, *āśrama-dharma*, *guṇa-dharma*, *nimitta-dharma*, etc. These are regarded as specific *dharma* (*viśeṣa dharma*) because that varies according to the status or position or condition of the particular individual or groups or societies. The *guṇa dharma* means the duty which is assigned to a particular person according to his qualification. Thus, the person who is qualified to perform a duty performs accordingly. Thus comes under the purview of *guṇa-dharma*. The action which has to be performed in the specific situation is *nimitta-dharma*. The specific *dharmas* vary from person to person. The poor are virtually ascetics and would abstain from if only karma, approaching with

experiences yet to be, would pass them by (*Tirukural* 378). Thus, the whole creation of the universe is the effect of actions. Each action produces reaction on other matter in one way or another.

CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

Today, almost each person is talking about corruption irrespective of any cast, religion, party, group or profession. However, actually, there is no person, lowest to highest, who performs his duty properly without having any self interest whether it is of his work place or outside of work place. Everyone is in want of more and more money, position, fame and so on by any means. For example, a doctor, teacher, advocate, executive etc. charge huge amount of fee in their respective profession besides their prescribed fees or salary on one pretext or another. Generally, it is lamented that the bureaucrats, judges, police commissioner, university administrator and an executive do not perform their duty freely or fearlessly either due to political interference or under the cloud of his personal weakness for self interest.

However, “Interest does not mean corruption merely; an interest may originate when one has any ulterior motive to do something in any particular manner. It may be to please a relative, friend or a superior. It also includes injuring some third person, to obtain a favour, promotion, confirmation etc. The main cause of all these is desire or *Kāma*; in words of B. N. Chobe:

“The desire is hydra-headed, raising its head where one least suspects, and taking up to charming appearance of duty, that it is difficult to tear its veil on veil behind and visualize its real form. It comes as national interest, communal good, social progress, the need for the time, and what not.”⁴⁰

According to *Gītā* a person, commits sin even if he does not wish but force to do so. This is so as: “*an action originates from rajo-guṇa -the quality of being active with desire is base. If the desire does not fulfill then it turns into anger which leads to mad behavior.*”⁴¹

All these become cause of committing abysmal sin. Therefore, the desire must be known as an enemy in this world. Thus, the root cause of the corruption is desire (*kāma*) because there is no limitation of one’s desire. Whatever sources of our earning are sufficient to lead our present life happily. It does not mean that we must not put in efforts for development in future life. The effort is necessary but all depends on time, situation and the consequences of our past *karman*.

However, having self interest is not the part and parcel of corruption. But, misusing power for the personal interest and with bad intention comes under the purview of corruption. In fact, an individual performs evil action that is detrimental to his higher and aristocratic interests. Therefore, there is no question of raising voice against corruption without having selfish attitude and being honest on the individual level. If we perform, our individual duty properly having selfless attitude only then we can stand against corruption.

CORRUPTION: THEORY OF *KARMAN* HOLDS THE KEY

The doctrine of *karman* teaches us to perform our duty honestly with full dedication. The person, of any class, who does not perform his duty as per the law of action must be ready for its bad consequences. The punishment or reward is not in the hand of man but all these are determined by the action, present or past, done by him. The *karman* plays very important role in the life of beings. If every individual performs his or her action keeping in the mind the law of causation on which theory of *karman* is based then the corruption may be prevented to a large extent. Therefore, we must understand properly the doctrine of *karman* and its consequences before performing good or evil action. The consequences of an action is definite no one can stop it. Bhartṛhari clearly states: “*a wise man, before going for meritorious or unmeritorious job, first must carefully think its consequence. The issue of actions done without proper thinking becomes, until death, like a dart, poignant to the art.*”⁴²

A minute observation of the theory of *karman*, in the light of above mentioned facts, reveals that it provides an adequate explanation about the condition, place, time and above all the purity of us. It guides our rightful path for the upliftments of one’s life when rightly perform. The *Karman* is a force because it can uplift’s the life of an individual, when rightly performed. The appearance of the variegated form of the universe is only the result of the *Karman* not any supernatural power. In the lack of the performance of *karman*, these variegated forms of vividness and various kinds of activities are not possible. Therefore, whatever our duty is must perform honestly and sincerely for making our future more pleasurable.

The fundamental of theory of *Karman* is law of causation. In western thought, we find two concepts in contrast to each other concerning the virtues theory, which may be compared with the theory under discussion.

“*Aristotle’s (384 to 322 BC) belief that the acme of political organization, and the role of the virtues in enabling human beings to flourish in that environment. Tacitus’s thinks that power and luxury can corrupt individuals and destroy liberty*”⁴³.

We find both concepts in our tradition. But, the concept of *niskāma-karman* presents nobler thought than that of Aristotle, which is applicable for all class of people. We find several powerful rulers in ancient India who served for their people without having any lust towards power and position. Janaka and others like him not only worked for the welfare of the people but got enlightened by performing their rightful action. Rama worked surrendering self-interest, performed his duty for the love of his duty instead of having any lust for reward or recompense. Rama is not only example of an ideal person but also a symbol of an ordinary citizen in general and of ruling powers in particular. He is ready to dedicate everything to serve for his subjects without any hesitation.

The great poet Bhavabūti, in his dramatic art *Uttararāmacaritam*, has expressed this quite lucidly: ‘*In the service of my people if duty demands I shall discard affection, mercy, and sacrifice personal comfort and if need be even my love Jānakī may have to be forsaken*’. He was not aware that how soon his profession would come in so strenuous

Corruption: Theory of Karman Holds the Key

situation for examination.”⁴⁴

Ram established an example of moral values for the people of Ayodhya by generously becoming ready for punishment inflicted on oneself as an outward expression of repentance for wrongdoing. He also reformed the entire environment of small regions like Kiṣkandhā and especially Lanka. In fact, “the truth is encompassed in law and justice”⁴⁵. Therefore, one must follow the rule of law instead of the rule of power. All these were possible only because he properly understood the theory of *Karman* and were fully aware about the consequences of not performing good or virtuous actions. Indeed, *karman* is not different from dharma (rule of law). Kauṭilya asserts that “a virtuous ruler can make happy even unendowed people. But, a characterless ruler spoils loyal and prosperous people.”⁴⁶

In India, from the Buddha to Gandhi, several great personalities have emerged from time to time who has vowed to save the countless numbers of sentient beings whenever needed. However, there is no end of suffering from the present world. This is so because the effect of the actions performed by beings is in continuity. Indeed, there is not any moment where none can be living without doing any action. All are bound to act by law of nature. Every being is engaged in performing the *karman* in one way or another. This is the law of nature that bodily, verbal or mental acts are continuously being performed. Therefore, one must not sit quietly but be engaged in the work. The person who sits quietly thinking of sense objects in his mind is a fool. This kind of person is regarded as corrupt man, with a presence of well conduct. Nevertheless, it is so because all thoughts good or bad, pleasure or pain, originate only from mind. Therefore, if we restrain our minds then all sorts of problems material or spiritual may expel. It means whatever action we perform that must comply properly and wisely. Whatever we have learnt from textual sources and from our experiences must be applied properly in every field of life whether it is our personal life, work place, society, any sort of business or anywhere. For example, if we teach our children the lesson of ‘*satyam eva jayate*’, honesty is the best policy, etc. then it must be applied by us in our daily work. However, we are not following this in our practices, we directly or indirectly speak lie or misrepresent our behaviour several times daily in one way or another. Thus, the minute observation on the theory of *karman* described in various treatises of Sanskrit literature reveals that there is much need of its practical applications in our way of life. Only verbal teaching is not sufficient in removing the wretched state of beings, as merely by reading the text of medical science, patient cannot be cured. In the words of Santideva: “*Only verbal teaching is not sufficient in removing the wretched state of beings, as merely by reading the text of medical science, patient treatment is not possible. Mental, verbal and physical, all actions are required equally, but mental act is the most important of all.*”⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Thus, the doctrine of *karman* is rule of law: the rule of *satyam*, *śivam*, *sundaram*, which provides that no one is beyond the law. ‘Truth is the basis of law and law is the basis of morality.’ Here, it will be worthwhile to quote an extract from *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulsidāsa, to make clearer about the consequences of misunderstanding the principle of

Karman in question: ‘If in the reign of any ruler, his dear subjects undergo unmerited suffering, he deserves to be punished both here and hereafter.’⁴⁸

Thus, considering above assertions it is pertinent to note that theory of *Karman* is the competent to solve various problems of the present world. Further, the doctrine is directly related with worldly affairs and its applicability is universal. Therefore, the doctrine is fully capable to face any challenges, if properly understood, provided by the present age of globalization. The corruption, which is the most challenging issue of this, arises because of misunderstanding the proper meaning of the concept of the doctrine exemplified in our scriptures, traditions, and teachings of our ancestors. There is neither need of any amendment in the constitution nor to stand for fighting against corruption as various persons are suggesting. Nevertheless, there is a need of proper understanding of one’s own duty, which comes under the purview of theory of *Karman* propounded in ancient Indian treatises. Whatever be our duty must be performed with full dedication in every situation. The proper understanding of *karman* means understanding of one’s duties. If not properly performed, one must be ready for bad consequences.

End Notes

- ¹ 183 countries of the world have assessed score of less than 5 implying highly corrupt nations.
- ² **Rgveda** : (10.190.3) *rtamścasatyāśca abhiddhāttapaso adhyajāyata, tato rātryajāyata tataḥ samudro arṇvā.*
- ³ **Rgveda:** (9.73-6), *ṛtasya panthāṁ na taranti duṣkrtaḥ,*
- ⁴ *svargaḥ panthāḥ sukrite devayānah.*
- ⁵ The ‘turning over’ of merit acquired by good deeds of an individual to the benefit of another, being, or of all beings. The doctrine appears in the Theravāda but is more fully developed in the *Mahāyāna*.
- ⁶ **Gītā** (9.2): *rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam pavitram idam uttamam pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam.*
- ⁷ **Manusmṛti** (12/100, 101: *saināpatyam ca rājyam ca dañḍanetṛtvam eva ca, sarvalokādhipatyam ca vedaśāstravidargati.*
- ⁸ **Gītā** (3/9) *yajñyārthāt karmaṇo’nyatra loko’yam karmabandhanah, tadarthan karma kaunteya muktasamgaḥ samācaraḥ. Gītā- 3/9*
- ⁹ **Abhijñānaśākuntalam** (7/34) :
*tava bhavatu vidaujāḥ prajyavrṣṭih prajāsu,
 tvamapi vitata yajño vajriṇam pṛīṇayālam,
 yugaśataparivṛttair’evamanyonyakṛtyair
 -jayatam ubhayalokānugraha ślāghanīyaiḥ.*
- ^{10.} **Dhammapada.** (160): *attā hi attano nātho ko hi nātho paro siyā,
 attanā hi sudantenā nātho bhavati dullabham.*

- ¹¹ Meghadūta (1/31)
- ¹² **Isopanisad** (1, 2): *Iṣāvāsyamidaṁ sarvam yatkiñcit jagatyāṁ jagat, tena tyaktena bhiñjithā mā grdhāḥ kasyasviddhanam.*
kurvanneveha karmāṇI jīvīśecchataṁ samāḥ, evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto’sti na karma lipyate nare.
- ¹³ *Gītā* (2/47): *karmanye vā dhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana’ mā karmaphala heturbhūrmā te saṅgo’ satvakaरmaṇi.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid* (4.16)..: *kim karma kimakarmeti kavayo’pyatra mohitāḥ, tatte karma pravakṣyāmi yajñātvā mokṣyase’subhāt.*
- ¹⁵ *Ibid* (4.17)
- ¹⁶ *Mahānirvāṇatantra* (8/5): *avasthānugatāś ceṣṭāḥ samayānugatāḥ kriyāḥ, tasmāt avasthāṁ samayaṁ vīkṣhya karma samācaren.*
- ¹⁷ *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*
- ¹⁸ *The Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. II)
- ¹⁹ *Pañcatantra*, story VIII, verse 270): *upakāriṣu yaḥ sādhuḥ sādhutve tasya ko guṇaḥ, apakāriṣu yaḥ sādhuḥ sasādhuḥ sadbhirucyate.*
- ²⁰. *Rgveda* (1/179/5c) *ṭpulukāmo hi martyaḥ,*
- ²¹ *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya* (i.2.12):
pradīpaḥ sarvavidyānām upāyaḥ sarvakarmanām, āśrayaḥ sarvadharmaṇām ṣaṣṭadānviṣṭkī matā.
- ²² *Ibid* (ii.8.20-21): *teṣāṁ haraṇopāyāścatvāriṁśat. -iti haraṇopāyāḥ.*
- ²³ *Ibid* (ii.9.32): *hyānāsvādayitum na śakyām jīhvātalaṣṭhaṁ madhu vā viṣaṁ vā, arhaṣṭhaḥ hyarthacareṇa rājñyaḥ svalop’pi anāsvāditum na śakyāḥ.*
- ²⁴ Kangle (1972): *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya*, Book II, chapter 9, sec.33
matsyāḥ yathāntaḥ salilām caranto jñātuṇ na śakyāḥ salilām pibantaḥ, yuktāṣṭhaḥ kāryavidhau niyuktā jñātuṇ na śakyā dhanamādānāḥ.
- ²⁵ *Ibid* sec II.934: *api śakyā gatirjñyātum patataṁ khe patatitṛṇām, na tu pracchannabhāvānām yuktānām caratām gatiḥ.*
- ²⁶ Kalidasa, *Raghuvanśam* (8/2):
duritairapi kartum ātmasāt prayatante nrīpasūnavo hiyat, Tadupasthitam agrahīataja piturājñyeti na bhogatrṣhnaya.
- ²⁷ *Manusmṛti* - *nakṣatram brahma bhavati kṣatram na brahma vardhate, brahma kṣatre tu samyukte ihamutra ca vardhate .*
- ²⁸ *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa* (8/9): *tad yatra vai brahmaṇaḥ kṣatram vaśameti tad rāṣṭraṇ samṛddhaṇ tada vīravadihāśmin vīro jāyate -*
- ²⁹ *Ibid* (IV.4.5): *Atha khalvāḥ kāmamāya evāyaṁ puruṣa iti. Sa yathakamo bhavatikraturbhavati, yatkraturbhavati tat karma kurute, yat karma kurute, tat abhisampadyate.*

³⁰ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* (IV.4.5) ...iti yathākārī ythācārī tathā bhavati sādhukārisādhurbhavati pāpākārī pāpo bhavati puṇyaḥ puṇyeṇa karmaṇā bhavati pāpah pāpena.

³¹ *Gitā* (2/20)

³² Kale, M.R., *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, Act V, Bombay, p.117, 1925.

³³ *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*(5/6) : svasukhanirabhilāsaḥ khidyate lokahetoḥ, pratidinam athavā tevrttirevaṁ vidhaiva, anubhavati hi mūrdhanā pādapas tīvramuṣṇam, śamayati paritāpaṁ chāyayā saṁśritānām

Ibid(5/7) : niyamayasivimārgapraṣṭhitānāttadaṇḍah, praśamayasivivādaṅkalpaserakṣ aṇāya, atanuṣuvibhaveṣujiñātayaḥsaṁvibhaktā- stvayituparisamāptarāmbandhuk'tyanjanānām.

³⁴. *Śāntiparva* (63/29) : sarve tyāgā rājadharmaṁ drśah sarvā dīkṣā rājadharmaṁ yuktāḥ sarvā rājadharmaṁ yuktāḥ sarve lokā rājadharmaṁ pravīṣṭāḥ.

³⁵. *Ibid* (68/24) rājñām ṣaṭrīraṁ grahaṇaṁ na bhogāya mahīpate, kleśāya mahate pṛthvīsvadharmaṇipālāne.

³⁶. Kauṭilya *Arthaśāstra* (1.19.34) prajāsukhe sukhāṁ rājñāḥ prajānām ca hite hitam, nātmapriyaṁ hitam rājñāḥ prajānām tu priyaṁ hitam.

³⁷. *Gitā* (3/21)

³⁸. *Ibid* (4/23) gatasāṅgasya muktasyajñānāvasthita cetasaḥ, yajñāya ācarataḥ karma samagraṁpraviliyate.

³⁹. *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* : satāṁ hi sandehapadeṣu vastuṣu pramāṇam antaḥkaraṇapravṛttayāḥ.

⁴⁰. Chobe B.N,(1961), *Ancient Freedom*, Pub. Purushottam Das Memorial Trust, Hyderabad-24, A.P.,p.2,
“*Sama-Veda 179 and 913 mentions 99 evil and corrupt practices originates from impurity of thoughts in the mind under the influence of senses, which results in the reduction of power of the spirit in the human body.*”

⁴¹. *Gitā* (3/37:) :kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavah, mahāśano mahāpāpmā vidhyenamīha vairiṇam.

⁴². *Nitiśatakam* (99): guṇavadguṇavad vā kurvatā kāryajātaṁ, pariṇatiravadvadhāryāyatnataḥ panditena, atirabhasakṛtānām karmaṇāmāvipatter bhavati hṛdayadāhīśalyatulyo vipākah.

⁴³. J.G.A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, see Wikipedea on Virtue ethics

⁴⁴. *Uttararāmacaritam* 1/12 : snehaṁ dayāṁ ca saukhyāṁ ca yadi vā jānakīm api, ārādhanāya lokasya muñcato nāsti me vyathā.

⁴⁵. *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 21/41: dharmo hi paramo loke dharme satyāṁ pratiṣṭhitam §

Corruption: Theory of Karman Holds the Key

^{46.} *Arthaśāstra*-(vi.1.16): *sampādayatysampannāḥ prakṛtirātmavān nrpaḥ, vivṛddhāś cānuraktāśca prakṛtīrḥantyanātmavān.*

^{47.} *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, (5/109): *kayenaiva paṭhiṣyāmi vākpāthena tu kim bhavet, cikitsā-pāṭhamātreṇa rogiṇāḥ kim bhaviṣyati.*

^{48.} *Rāmacaritamānasa* : *jāsu rājya priya prajā dukhārī, so nrpa avaśa naraka adhikārī.*

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